Body identified by X-rays

By Bill Deener
Staff Writer of The News

The haunting mystery of whose body was actually buried in the grave of Lee Harvey Oswald was solved within minutes Sunday morning through a simple procedure of comparing dental records, said Dr. Irving Sopher, chief medical examiner for West Virginia.

"This (comparing dental records) is as exact as using fingerprints," Sopher said. "The main point is the shape of the fillings. Lee Harvey had about 10 fillings, so after we took X-rays, it was clear beyond any doubt that the body was, in fact, Oswald's."

The examination began about 10:30 a.m. A description of the clothing and the general condition of the body was recorded. The examination was videotaped at the request of Marina Oswald Porter.

Two rings on Oswald's left hand were removed and given to Mrs. Porter for positive identification. The 4-member team of pathologists then focused on identifying the body through dental records.

The head was severed from the body so that the skull and teeth could be X-rayed accurately, Sopher said. The rest of the body was left in the coffin for the 5-hour examination.

X-rays taken March 27, 1953, while Oswald was in the U.S. Marine Corps, were compared with the 16 X-rays taken Sunday, Sopher said.

"The comparison of the X-rays showed no incompatibility whatsoever," Sopher said.

Dr. James Cottone, one of the team members from San Antonio, said the only difference between this case and the hundreds of others he has worked during seven years in the field was the significance.

"There was a lot more security involved and there was a myriad of details to be covered. Then the documentation had to be done a lot more carefully than usual because of the significance of the case," he said.

"We went over it tooth by tooth, taking X-rays at different angles to get all the dental impressions. It was a rather painstaking process," Cottone said.

The pathologists also found a "bone scar" on the left side of the skull from a mastoid operation that Oswald had when he was 8 years old.

Dr. Linda Norton, head of the team, said the findings will be published in a medical journal.